

~~SECRET/NOFORN~~NIO/EUROPE
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Germany

Germany has once again become the center of East-West disputes:

- In Berlin, East German authorities have declared that US, French and British diplomats entering the eastern sector of the city can no longer do so strictly on the basis of their post-World War II occupation authority but must have passports with East German visas. Although this GDR action had to have Soviet approval, it is unclear whether the Soviets initiated it, routinely coordinated a GDR request or were maneuvered into approving it by the GDR. Ironically this GDR action against four-power rights comes when the Soviets have (1) just reaffirmed another four-power institution--the Military Liaison Missions--that the East Germans are known to loathe, and (2) reached a seeming modus vivendi with the three western allies over the air corridors (the Soviets do not deprive the allies of the minimum airspace needed for safe landings, the allies keep protesting that this is not enough but do nothing about it).
- In West Germany, meanwhile, Bonn and Moscow have entered an open polemic over the Soviet liability for economic losses due to the Chernobyl accident. While Soviet secrecy is the root cause of the problem and has generated European-wide outrage, the authorities in West Germany made the post-Chernobyl situation worse by issuing ambiguous and sometimes exaggerated radioactivity warnings. As a result, farmers suffered some needless losses and the CDU now fears that the farmers of Lower Saxony will retaliate by either abstaining or voting for the Greens in the all-important 15 June election. To cope with this danger the federal government has acted with unusual dispatch in compensating the Lower Saxony farmers for their losses. The publicizing of demands for compensation from Moscow are probably intended to keep the focus on Moscow rather than on nuclear power per se or the federal government's own handling of the Chernobyl crisis.

Thus the Soviet-East German move over access to East Berlin, the wanton Soviet disregard of international norms of conduct over Chernobyl, and Kohl's political imperatives have put the Soviet Union and its East German allies into a confrontational stance against the US, the UK, France and West Germany. The Berlin situation is particularly ticklish as it will require a backing down by one side or the other and, as any attempt to whittle away the few remaining four-power prerogatives in that city, could easily escalate into a tenser confrontation.

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